GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:205
ANSWERED ON:16.11.2016
Telecom Servicecs in Rural Areas
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is according top priority in provision of mobile and other telecom services in rural areas and proposes to install mobile towers in rural backward and tribal areas;

(b) If so, the details of mobile towers(2G, 3G, and 4 G) set up in such areas, State and operator-wise;

(c) the present status of Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) in providing telecom service in these areas and the time by which all the villages are likely to be covered by mobile and other telecom services;

(d) whether difficulties are being faced in providing telecommunication facilities in the such areas and delay and cost escalation also takes place in setting up infrastructure and if so, the details thereof, and the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard;

(e) the details regarding rate of call drop in small areas alongwith the action taken by TRAI thereon ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)

(a) to (c) The Government has proposed/planned various schemes with financial support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to ensure mobile telecommunication service in backward and tribal areas of the county. It is estimated that there are about 55,000 villages in the country that do not have mobile coverage. Mobile coverage to these uncovered villages is likely to be provided in a phased manner, subject to availability of financial resources. Government has prioritized to provide mobile communication services in uncovered villages in LWE affected areas, North-Eastern States, Islands, and Himalayan States in the first phase, with financial support from USO Fund.

Action taken by the Government for expansion of telecom infrastructure is as below:

(i) On 10.09.2014, the Government approved a proposal to implement a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region (NER). The Project envisages providing mobile coverage to 8621 identified uncovered villages by installation of about 6673 mobile towers, installation of 321 mobile tower sites along National Highways and strengthening of transmission network in the NER. The estimated cost of implementation is Rs. 5336.18 crore. The Project would be funded from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF). State-wise details are at Annexure-I.
(ii) 2199 mobile towers are being set up in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected States with a total estimated cost of Rs.3567.58 crore. 2185 mobile towers are radiating as on 31.10.2016. State-wise details are at Annexure-I.
(iii) Telecom Commission has given 'in principle' approval on 07.11.2014 for Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan including provision of mobile connectivity for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands with a total estimated investment of Rs. 221.05 crore.

(d) Service Providers including Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) have reported following difficulties in providing telecommunication services in rural, hilly and remote areas:

(i) Low population density and difficult location conditions makes service provision financially unviable.
(ii) CAPEX (Capital Expenditure) and OPEX (Operational Expenditure) for development of telecom infrastructure in these areas is very high.
(iii) Lack of adequate telecom backhaul connectivity.
(iv) Lack of proper supporting infrastructure (road, electricity supply etc.)

(e) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) monitors the performance of service providers, against the benchmarks for various quality of service parameters laid down by TRAI in the Quality of Service Regulations issued from time to time through Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports (PMRs) submitted by service providers for the service area as a whole. No separate information for Rural Areas is available with TRAI.

For improving the quality of service, TRAI has taken the following steps:

1. Close monitoring of performance of service providers, against the benchmarks for various Quality of Service parameters laid down by TRAI, through periodic reports from service providers.
2. Follow up action with service providers and action plan for improving quality of service, including for Call Drop parameters.
3. Meeting with the service providers at CEO level to evaluate the performance against action plan including for Call Drop parameters.
4. Audit and Assessment of Quality of Service through independent agencies.
5. Assessment of customer perception of service through surveys by independent agencies.
6. Publication of results of Audit & Assessment of Quality of Service, including for Call Drop parameters and Surveys on TRAI website namely www.trai.gov.in for information of stakeholders, forcing the service providers to improve its service.
7. Imposition of financial disincentives for non-compliance with the benchmarks for Quality of Service parameters.
8. Review of network related Quality of Service parameters and benchmarks for mobile services to improve of Quality of experience by consumers.
9. TRAI has recently launched TRAI analytic portal www.analytics.trai.gov.in. The TRAI QoS Analytics portal provides a graphical view on the map of India the performance of the 2G service providers on call drop (on all India level, service area level, district level and Base Transceiver Station(BTS) level), BTS density per square kilometer and network utilisation so that the consumers can have informed choice based on quality of service.
10. For addressing Call Drop, TRAI regularly undertakes the drive tests of mobile networks in select cities, highways and railway routes to assess the Quality of Service and coverage around the areas covered in the drive test routes.
11. The results of Drive tests are shared with the service providers for improving Quality of Service and coverage in the areas identified in the Drive Tests.

Annexure-I

Mobile Towers proposed for uncovered villages and along National Highways in NER
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S.No. State No. of Villages proposed to be covered Number of Towers Proposed for Uncovered Villages No. of Towers proposed along National Highways
1 Arunachal Pradesh 2805 1893 149
2 Assam 2503 1874 33
3 Manipur 528 384 53
4 Meghalaya 2374 2162 11
5 Mizoram 252 227 19
6 Nagaland 134 112 48
7 Sikkim 23 19 1
8 Tripura 2 2 7
TOTAL 8621 6673 321
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State-wise breakup of locations under the scheme of mobile services to LWE Affected Areas
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S. No. State No. of Total Locations identified by MHA
1. Andhra Pradesh 54
2. Bihar 184
3. Chhattisgarh 497
4. Jharkhand 782
5. Maharashtra 60
6. Madhya Pradesh 22
7. Odisha 253
8. Telangana 173
9. Uttar Pradesh 78
10. West Bengal 96
Total 2,199
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